

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Local Missions Sunday

PART

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TITLE

Compelled To Reach The City For Christ

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 4:2-6



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My name's Dave, one of the pastors here. It's good to see. If you have your Bibles, Colossians, chapter four, Colossians, chapter four. If you don't have a Bible, if you're new to Christianity or studying, please take one of the Bibles under the chair in front of you, take that. That's a gift from us to you. You can find Colossians there in the New Testament, and we'll be looking at chapter four. So, welcome to those also live-streaming. We say good morning to you. March Madness is in full effect. My bracket is bomb. So, we will continue. Life will go on.

So, let me just give a quick shout out to all the red shirts in the room, and the ones that are dirty at home that couldn't be worn this morning. We are so grateful. You guys just did an amazing job. I know we saw the video, but I just wanted to say on behalf of our team and our church, I was so, so grateful. Close to 700 of you in the city yesterday serving at just 25-30 places. I just heard so many stories of God just doing some awesome stuff in our city. And so, we're grateful for Providence. We do things like that. We gather here, and then we scatter there. We also are reminded that we're a people. We're not a building, we're not a place; we're a people. Providence is a people, and so we love when our people come together to fellowship and getting the word but also scatter to the city to share and to love on her well.

This weekend is unique in and of itself. It is a city serve weekend where we loved our city yesterday, but we're learning about some of our ministry partners, and so you'll hear more about that at the end of our service, but some opportunities for our missionaries that are in the city, that do work here in Raleigh, to be able to partner with them and learn about what they're doing. Then, also, the opportunity to listen to the word this morning, to hear what God would have to say, His desire for us to be able to reach even this city. We believe that the light that shines the brightest at home shines the farthest away, and so we're about our neighbors as well as the nations at all times.

If you have your word, I want to be able to just set this up for us, because were you find yourself, if you're living the city ... Maybe you're a guest, maybe you're visiting, but if you live in this city, it is truly an amazing place, Raleigh, North Carolina, that God has allowed us to be a part, to be a church, to be a people here. Just recently, I enjoy studying some of the trends of what our city looks like, who's coming, who's leaving. Some 60 are moving here daily. Also, one study came out recently. I want to show you Raleigh, North Carolina, ranks second as the most family-friendly cities in North America. That recently came out.

But the one that kind of blew me away, as I was studying some of this, was that Raleigh now ranks third best in quality of life in the world, in the world. Out of 200+ cities that they listed. And here's what's interesting about this as well, what's interesting, also, is that only out of the three U.S. cities in the top 16 found in the world of the top 16 cities to live in the world, three were from the U.S., and then two were from North Carolina. So, Charlotte, North Carolina, is the 10th, ranked 10th. So our state, even has two in the top 10 to live in, which is just fascinating to think through the advancement of medicine and the schools that are here, some we like, some we don't like. It's just fascinating what God's doing.

So, here's what we want to do. We want to just dive in God's word and learn a little bit together this morning. So, let me pray for us and then we'll rock and roll: Father, thank you for the day. Thank you for this time. Thank you for your grace and your mercy. Thank you for the opportunity to open this book in hopes that it would open us, in a sense as we read it, it would read us, and that we could learn this morning. So, would you teach us this morning? We pray, in Jesus name. Amen.

Let me set this context, because what you have in your hand this morning is quite fascinating. I want to give you the context of how we got this and what Paul ... Because I think you feel the weight of these final words in chapter four, when you know where they're coming from. So, Paul is a man who came to faith in Jesus. He was persecuting Christians. He ended up radically changed by the gospel of Jesus and went to preaching and planting churches, and traveled all over the place. So, as he started traveling, he would get arrested in certain places that it was not legal to preach the gospel, which it's like that in many places today around the world. So, he was arrested. He's in prison in Rome.

But before he got there, he was at a city called Ephesus. This city was on the Mediterranean Sea. He was preaching. There was a man named [inaudible] who came to faith there. He's overwhelmed by this message of the gospel. He goes back to his hometown Colossae, and as he goes back to his hometown ... I'm going to show you a map here that shows this. As he goes back to his hometown, he's loving the city, he's serving the city, he plants a church in the city, and he's there in Colossae. Well, as the church is growing, false teaching is trying to get in. People are being like, "What is this thing about this man named Jesus who dies for our sins, came back from the dead?"

Well, he's so concerned about some of the teaching that he takes Southwest Airlines ... No. No Southwest back in the day, right? No, he takes a boat and his feet, and he travels across the southern part of the Aegean Sea, Mediterranean Sea into Corinth, Greece, goes over there all the way up this side to Italy on his feet to Rome. Who knows? Three months, four months? It's a long trip. 1180 miles. Do that on your little Google thing on how you walk, and you'll come up with how long it took.

He gets there. He finds Paul in prison. I don't know what the visitation hours were. I don't know how that worked, but he's talking with him. He's engaging with him. He's telling him about this, right? Well, he writes this letter along with another letter, Ephesians, and there's another brother, [inaudible] who is there who's going to be out and be able to take the letters back. So he, this guy, travels back to Colossae. He also has the letter Ephesians. I mean, just think about that, if it takes three or four months, how God ... I mean, he's camping, right? He's camping at night. Maybe a tent, maybe just sleeping on the ground with these letters beside him.

And he gets back, and he reads this letter to the church, the people at Colossae are called the Colossians. He reads this letter back. This is what you have in your hand this morning. Don't ever take that for granted. Or you turned it on and scroll to it. This is incredible. And so, Paul, listen to what he says in verse two as he closes this letter down. He exalts Christ in the first couple of chapters, amazing. He's giving these final words of encouragement.

He says, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak, and walk in wisdom toward outsiders. Making the best use of time, let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

Providence, let me show you three truths real quick this morning that I think could help you just be encouraged in communicating this gospel, being compelled to share this gospel, to plant the gospel in this city. God desires this for us. In 1 Peter, chapter 2, he says that we are chosen, "that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Second Corinthians 5 he says it like this, "God makes his appeal." This is the way God does it, he's making his appeal through us, those that are Christians, to those that are not Christian.

This morning, let me just speak to you if you're not a Christian, if you're exploring Christianity, maybe you're tuning in, just live stream, "What do these people believe?" Listen, let me first and foremost say this, let me ask you to forgive us for being arrogant and prideful, and how we try to share with you. We come across oftentimes as we know it all, and we don't, and we're sorry. But no, oh no, that we long for you to know Christ. We just don't communicate that the best way sometimes, but we're growing, we're striving.

This morning, if you're not a believer, we want you to lean in and listen, but I'm going to be speaking specifically to those that are Christians to help encourage all of us in how to maybe be more effective in sharing the gospel. We're so glad you're here, but just know, lean in and listen. Maybe God would even encourage your heart to consider this Christ that we're trying to communicate to you this morning, okay?

Here's what we're going to do, let's go, how do we communicate this Christ? I think God desires for us to do it in three ways, not exhaustive, but three ways. The first is this, God desires, we labor, God desires that we labor in prayer before we share. Notice the text, verse 2, it says, "Continue steadfastly in prayer," Paul, he's in prison, he's been arrested for preaching this gospel, and he says, "Listen, continue Colossian church, steadfastly," he didn't just say, "Continue in prayer," he could just say, "Pray," he says "Continue," that's ongoing, "steadfastly," that's leaning into it, with intentionality ... for Paul prayer is to his heart and his mind and his worldview what air was to his lungs.

Paul knew that before he talked about God to others, that he should talk to God. He knew that power from God always comes from prayer to God. He's telling them to continue steadfastly in in. Notice what else the text says, the text says, "Being watchful in it," what is this? This is an alertness, right? This is where you lean in with intentionality, that you're aware of God's presence in the everyday of life. This is 10/2 on the steering wheel, [inaudible] in the news at 5 pm. Why, why would they allow those children with learner's permit to drive on ... You should not be able to drive on [inaudible] until your 25 with multiple hours of driving experience.

This is 10/2, this is this alertness, right? This is what I did not have on vacation years ago with my family, right? When my family and I were at the beach having a good time, the kids are seven, five, three, one. Something like that. I forgot their names, I just know I have four and one wife, so when we're on vacation. We're on vacation. We were getting ready to get in this ride, and as we're getting ready to get in this ride, I'm just constantly doing headcount. Don't call them by names, call them wrong names, don't call them bad names. I just call them ... And there's my wife and there's three, and I was like, well, the last time I counted, I thought we had four. Where is the fourth one? Where did she go?

And I begin to panic a bit. Thinking what happened to her? And as I'm looking and my wife is always calm, looks at me like I'm strange, and she goes, Dave, you're holding her. Yes, yes I am. Yes, she's right here on my hip, she's on my hip. I was trying to gather, honey, the others. And in gathering the others, I totally forgot she was on my hip. On my ... Listen, listen. Listen.

You can be close to God ... You can be close to God and still miss him. You can be close in your own world, and miss him. He says be alert. With thank giving, he says. Continue steadfastly, watchful, but then with thanks giving. Paul is ... Listen, Paul's always grateful. In every prayer. He's always. Thanks giving is the envelope in which every prayer by Paul is delivered to God. Thanks giving. He's flooded with gratitude. He never, ever gets over the fact that he has access to God. At any time. At any place. So, what's happening? He's flooded ... He's flooded with gratitude.

He doesn't have to go to a priest, he doesn't have to ... He can just call on God because of a great high priest whose gone before him and has provided a way that has given us and Hebrews a word that says we can draw near to him with confidence. To the throne of grace in our time of need, and receive help. Mercy. And grace. Oh my, listen. Paul's prayers were always flooded with gratitude. That would suggest ... I would suggest ours should be too.

So, listen. Listen, he says, to continue steadfastly in a watchful thanks giving, but notice what he prays for. Notice the text, the detail of the text. Listen. The detail of the text. He says it like this. He says, first, God, prayer Colossian church that God would open to us. Now, watch what the text says. I'm thinking in my mind as I'm reading the story, as I'm reading the word, I'm thinking the next word that should come is to ... Church of Colossae, pray for us, church planters, to ... For God to open the cell door. The prison door. So we can get out. That's what I'm thinking the text should read. The text doesn't read that. The text says, at the same time, pray also for us that God may open to us a door.

He's asking for a door to be opened, but it's not the prison door. He's asking for a door while he's in prison to be opened to share the gospel. What is he asking for? What is his prayer request? His prayer request is this. He's in a hard place, and he's not asking to get out of the hard place. He's asking that while he's in a hard place, that God would help him preach and teach and share the gospel. Listen, that's just a side sermon for another series when you're in a hard place. You don't feel like sharing the gospel, and maybe that's the very thing that would give your own heart hope to stay in that hard place. That's what's happening. He's asking for a door to be opened.

He's also asking for boldness. Look at what he says, that we may declare. It's a declaration. The mystery of Christ. He's asking for this boldness. Listen, in the west when I talk to some of our friends that are overseas in hard places, this is a constant prayer request that they would pray for boldness. And I find myself, I just don't pray for boldness often times, because sometimes I associate it with arrogance. But then I think there's a way you can pray for God to deepen your convictions, that would allow you to be bold. Winsome, humble, but bold. Sometimes in my walk, right, sometimes I want to share weekly, I don't feel like sharing weekly, and sometimes I'll just make it a prayer. God, would you help me be bold this week. So, I'll just identify the word either. Opportunity. God, would you give me opportunities. I'm just praying each day.

Sometimes, God, would you help me be bold today throughout the day? So sometimes, I'll just be praying for that and God and his kindness, right? Be careful what you pray for, and so I'm at the gym, I'm at the Y, I'm on the treadmill, and I'm sensing the lord, like maybe he wants me to share. And I'm like, well I don't feel like share ... I'm in the gym, right? I've got my head plug ... Just leave me alone. So, I'm on the treadmill, and this dude comes in. He's like 6'6", 280. Right? His biceps are bigger than my body. And he gets on the treadmill beside me. Certainly he's not the one that he wants me to share with. That's for certain, right? Because he would take me down and crush me. So, I put my headphones back in, and the lord says, no. That's who I want you to share with.

And I'm like, I ain't listening to you, lord. I'm going to be disobedient. That felt ... I felt confidence. I felt confidence swelling. God whispered in this ear, I made him. I made him in my image. My voice put stars in the universe. Speak to him, Dave. Yes, sir.

What's up, man?

What's up, man?

How you doing?

I'm all right.

God, he's not interest. He's not interested.

What's your name, man?

My names Lazarus.

Oh, this might go well. Really? I love that name. I've heard that name before. How are you doing, Lazarus?

I'm all right.

Do you play football, Lazarus?

Yeah, man. College. I play college football.

How's your day, Lazarus?

I just buried a teammate last week.

And both treadmills slow down.

Lazarus, do you want to talk about that, man? Because there's a story about another man names Lazarus that met another man. His name is Christ, and it changed his life. Both treadmills stop. We're in the hallway, and about 20 minutes later, he trusts Christ. Listen, it's hard. But there's hope. Pray for boldness and watch God work.

Listen, he asks, for opportunities. He asks for boldness, but then he asks, look at the text. The text says, to declare the mystery of Christ on which I'm a prisoner, right? That I ... Now, listen. Paul, who, if he's praying for help and outreach, you and I should probably pray for help and outreach. And he goes, that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

What is Paul doing here? He's asking for prayer that when he shares, that he is crystal clear on the message. That he's crystal clear. That it's not a message about a program or a person other than Christ. About a place, about a political party. It's about a man who was promised in the beginning of this book, who would come and make everything right, and that the wages of sin is death. And there's brokenness everywhere. I'm broken, you're broken. And we will die one day. And there's a man who came and lived a perfect life. He met the standard that God set, and then he took on the penalty that should be on us. He took it. And he absorbed God's wrath, and he drank every single drop of God's wrath. And if you repent in trust, and place your faith in him, God gives you his righteousness. He justifies you. He looks on you as righteous.

And you're given strength for everyday living and hope for eternal life. You're still going to die, but death serves you now. It's not an enemy against you. And it's a doorway into the entrance and presence of God. He wants crystal clarity on that message. It is nothing you and I can do to add anything to that. And so if you're here this morning, listen, and you're not a believer, I want to encourage you to consider following Christ even today. But if you're here this morning, and you are a believer, let's be crystal clear on what we share. It's a man. His name is Jesus the Christ. And he changed the world. He created it. He's glorious. And he loves you.

So, listen. Let's ask for opportunities, let's ask for boldness, but let's also ask for clarity. [Tim Keller 00:23:55] sums it up like this. It's simple, I like this. He's a pastor in New York. He says, the Christian gospel. He says, we are more sinful and flawed than we ever dared believe. Yet more loved and accepted in Christ than we ever dared hope. Oh, listen. Paul. He's encouraging us this morning. He's encouraging us. He would encourage even those in Philippi. When he was arrested, he wrote another letter to the left of Colossians, call it Philippians. And he wrote, he said, listen. What has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. What has happened? He's in prison. He's in a hard place. And yet it's served. How has it served to advance the gospel? Because it says in the text that everyone in there, all the guards, know why he is there.

Why he's been arrested. Why has he been arrested? Because he's telling everybody about Jesus. And yet at the end of the book, it's fascinating how Philippians ends in chapter four. It says, as Paul's closing that letter down, he says, greet all the people, God's people. So, he's writing to a church in Philippi. He said, greet all of them in Christ. The brothers and sisters who are with me. So, others have been arrested with Paul preaching this gospel. They send greetings. All Gods. People here send greetings. And this is how he closes out there letter. He says, especially those in Caesar's household.

Who is that? Know who that is? That's the guards, that on their shift as they come into work, and they're assigned that cell door with a man behind them writing letters to people named Paul, who is a Christian, he probably put the pen down for just a minute and said, man, what's your name? And then he shared the gospel with that guard. And then he shared the next guard. And the guards are there, right? Their supervisors down the hallway, and the guards are sitting there, and the guards are probably leaning back into the cell door, saying, Paul, what you doing, man?

And he said, man, I'm writing a letter to these people that I helped plan a church in Philippi to encourage them. And the guards looking around, making sure his supervisors not listening, and he leans back in, and he says, Paul. Tell them we said hey as well.

You imagine that? Getting greetings from the guards that Paul's leading to Christ in prison. And they make it into the end of the book to say, tell them we said hey.

Listen, God, he desires that we labor in prayer. So, let's be a people who labor in prayer for power to share. I spend most of my time on that one, because I think it's so significant, and I think for us in the church in the west, it's one that we struggle with. So, may God do a great work through that.

Second, really quick. God desires we leverage our lives by living wisely. He desires that we leverage our lives by living wisely. Looking for his [inaudible 00:26:59]. He says, walk in wisdom toward outsiders. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders. What he's saying here, is listen how what you say and how you live should match up. It doesn't say to be perfect. It's just I think he's leaning in. He's saying as businessmen and businesswomen and moms and students, let's do our work with integrity. Let's be men and women of character. Let's reflect. Let's repent quickly when we do mess up.

Yet let's walk in a manner worthy. Ephesians four, it says, let's walk in a manner worthy of the calling. I love the word worthy there. It's a word that's from the original language that it was written in, that we get our word today. The word axle. Right? An axle is that thing, I'll show you on a picture here, that holds the car. It holds the car us in a sense. It holds the right tire and the left tire. And what an axle will do is it keeps it level, but if the tire on the right ... Let's just say the tire on the right is what you profess, you believe, about God is that tire. And then the tire on the left, fully inflated to regulations, right? 35 PSI, whatever that thing is. That's what you tell people you believe and how you live.

So, what you believe here in your heart is on this tire, and this tire is how you live it out. What you're telling other people. And if they're matching up, again, we're not perfect. We're people who repent a lot, and ask for forgiveness and try to move forward. If those are lined up, the car is going to move forward. It's going to roll. You're going to get somewhere in conversations. But if what you say you believe, and you don't live like that, the axle breaks. It's like a monster truck, right? Monster truck ... Nobody can outdo a monster truck. You can have the name Thunder Beast, but if the axle breaks, you're not moving. You're not going anywhere.

And when God say, listen. I want you to advance the conversations. I want you to move. I want it to ... What you say you believe and how you live to match up. And live a life worthy of the calling, and to leverage your life.

Notice what Colossians says. It says, making the best use of the time. Making the best use of the time. Redeeming the time. So, as you're living this way, there's a sense of ... You're accomplishing what you have to accomplish at work, but you're living in such a way. Listen, culture's gotten to the point now, they may not listen to you, but they're always watching you. And it may be five years of faithfulness in the marketplace. It may be 10 years of laboring with that colleague that you went to college with, and God in his grace, radically changed you and not them, and you have a heart for them. It's ... It can be 20 years of cultivating faithfulness of living in such a way that's winsome, hopeful, flooded with peace.

Listen, he desires. He says, make the best use of the time. Redeem the time. The word for time there, it's not like, hey what time is it? It's the actual era. It's the season. All the hashtags that were coming this week. Former alumni from their team, right? That's in march madness. All they were posting is, y'all know what time it is. Y'all know what time it is. None of the commentators were like, yeah man. It's 10:15. That's not what they're saying. No, it's game time. Right? It's march madness. It's the best season of the year, right? With the masters right down the road coming after it. And it's spring time. The trees are blooming. There's a freshness. It's game time.

Paul is saying, listen. It's game time for the Christian to live wisely toward outsiders and leverage their life. Listen, really fast. In a way of application, let's leverage our lives. Let's leverage them in the every day to point many to the final day. Let's leverage, yes, in the everyday, to point many to the final day.

At last, as God desires that we lavish grace on all in our speech. Notice verse six how this thing closes. He says, let your speech always be gracious. Always be gracious. Not sometimes be gracious. Let it always be gracious. And we can be gracious in our speech, because God has been so gracious to us in sending his son. Oh, we should be marked by gratitude, people. We should be marked by humility and grace in our words as they come out. Look, you don't have to be offensive. The gospel's offensive enough. You don't have to be. You tell somebody they're going to die, go to hell if they don't trust Jesus? You can say that in a winsome way. That's offensive. You need ... You're broken. I'm broken. There's a holy God who demands perfection. And I couldn't do it. And neither can you. And there's one who has come who has done it. I want to introduce you to him in your conversations. Be winsome and humble. Truthful.

Speak with grace. James says, oh my. Listen, James says it pretty direct how powerful the tongue is. Right? There's a reason God put it in a cage. Your teeth are ... It's a cage. Had to put that thing back there, because it'll ... It's dangerous. James would say it like this. Take ships as an example. They're large, they're driven by strong wind. They're directed by a smaller rudder, wherever the pilot wants to go, or a great forest that's set on fire by a small spark. The tongue is a fire. A world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire. Think about that for a moment. Think about those illustrations James is using to make a point of a rudder. Think about this cargo ship and how big it is. And yet the rudders, how small it is. And yet it directs its course. And it's oftentimes not seen, partly submerged in the water.

Or think about a spark, just a small match. The damage it can do and has done in the California fires. The damage. This is what he's saying. The power of the tongue, but I like to think of it like this. To the degree we can destroy things with our tongue, we also have the opportunity to speak life with words of grace. To the degree that we can destroy things with our tongue, we also have the opportunity to speak life with words of grace.

Notice what the text says. The text says, it's also seasoned with salt. So, what does that mean? Seasoned with salt. Salt does a lot of things, but ultimately ... Have you ever taken a bite of something and you're hungry, you're chewing a little bit too fast, and you catch a piece of the inside of your mouth in the teeth. And it just takes the whole experience away from the food, because you're hurting. Then it's bleeding and it turns into a canker sore. And then you end up, right, taking some salt water and then ... Right? Back and forth. And right when you put it in, it's like ... It stings. And while it's stinging, it's actually healing.

Or you step on that rock at the beach and it's bleeding, and you run into the ocean, and you're like ... The salt water stings. At the same time it's healing. And this is what the gospel does. It may sting their ears, but it's bringing healing to the heart. This is what the gospel does. It's good news. It is good news of what Christ has done.

Listen, in closing, notice what the text says. It says, so that ... So, you're walking in wisdom, you're letting your speech be gracious. So that you may know how you ought to answer every person. One of our interns this week, was talking with him this week, and he got this text, it was amazing, from this young lady that he had met over two years ago. Hadn't heard from since. She was from New York. Was downtown one day, he was down there. Homeless. Sleeping outside. He had a pillow and a sleeping bag in his bag, he got out, felt the lord just send him in and just give it to this young lady. He gave it to her, spoke words of grace to her. Encouraged her with hope and God. Never saw her again. And then this week, somehow from South Carolina, through Google and some other ways, figured out how to get in touch with him. And just sent him the most precious text.

It said, thank you, in essence, for speaking words of grace to me. I'm no longer homeless. I'm pursuing God, a degree, I'm working at a non-profit. And your words gave me hope.

You never know how God's going to use your words speaking grace. And so let's be a people. Let's speak the gospel with grace in all of words, and let's be a people that live in the city, recognizing who's in this city. God is bringing tremendous amount of people here that are broken and hurting and looking for answers in the wrong places. God's also bringing the nations to us, in this city. It's remarkable. One of the places we partner with yesterday. The incredible amount of nationalities that are represented there as a refugee community that we have the opportunity to just speak hope into. It's a people that we partner with, and I want to show you a little video of what God's actually doing there on falls of the neuse road. So, check it out.

Video: My father and my mother born in Afghanistan. But the [inaudible] is very bad, so my families came to Pakistan. I born in Pakistan.

My parents were born in Burma, which is now known as Myanmar. They were forced out by the Burmese military.

We left the Congo because there was a war.

In Pakistan, the Hazara people is like a hiding. The Taliban, they are always kill the Hazara people. I lose my aunts, I lose my uncle. My dad lose his eyes.

Here's my dad. My husband worked with American people. They are say, you should go America, because you are not safe here.

Coming as refugees, it's really hard since we don't know how to speak English and there's not a lot people that we know around here. But we've met some great amazing people who has helped us out.

Most people who hear about refugee hope partners don't realize there's over 30 countries represented in the Cedar Point apartments, and most likely more languages than that. Most of the refugees have weak communication skills in English, so ESL is critically important. It's really the avenue with which to get a job in the United States, and for kids, it's the avenue to participate in and be successful in school.

Refugee hope partners helps kids like me who needs help with schoolwork. They help us find out what we like and what we want to do with our future, so that we can become successful.

We go to, sometimes high school hangout, where we learn about God and bible study as well. The more I came to bible study, I started becoming a better person. I knew what was wrong, and I knew the right people to hang out with. And that really helped me.

The spiritual component of refugee hope partners is the foundation of why we're here, why we're engaging in the community.

If it wasn't for refugee hope partners, spiritually, I don't think I would have this much faith in God. [crosstalk 00:39:52].

The bible show me that God's relationship with Jesus, and also Jesus show me the relationship with people, including me. I feel freedom here. And never I feel freedom in my country.

I hope I go college, I get my degree. I hope in the future I'm a nurse. Or a doctor, maybe.

To be the first person to go to college in my family. My parents would be really proud of me.

My life was changed significantly since I came to the USA four years ago. Refugee hope partners helped my parents to get really good jobs at NC State, and that helped my parents to get our own house. So, it's like a dream come true.

Dave: In promise, praise God for ministries like that that we partner with. And what he's doing in our cities. Let's be a people this week, and lavish grace on a lot of them, okay? By speaking the gospel of hope. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for the day, thank you for the opportunity to be able to come and to worship and to hear and to see what you're doing. Not only in your word through this man, Paul, who was radically changed by Jesus. God, I pray that you will continue to lift out eyes to Christ, that you will continue to help us be a people who would pray and that would live wisely. And that would lavish grace in all of their speech. In conversations. God, help us to be just mindful, have an alertness of your presence, God. It's just hard at times.

And so we need you. We need your spirit. We're asking this as a people, as a church together, God. Father, strengthen those ministries that we partner with, like refugee hope. Continue to strengthen their hand, God. Continue to build up faith in you and trust in you, and God, for those that are here this morning that don't know you. God, would you stir their hearts to let them see that there's a desire for us to reach them, and that God, maybe even today would be the day that you open their eyes. So, we love you, God. We're just so grateful. Humbled by your grace. Pray this in Jesus name. Amen.



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